

THE LIGHT AND HEALTH TAX.—"Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun."—Ecc. 11th chap., 7th verse. If blindness be an affliction, it surely is an affliction to live in houses where nearly every chink and crevice which admit the light and air into our dwellings are "taxed." Where darkness predominates dirt accumulates, and as our Government taxes the admission of light and air into the dark dwellings of the poor, especially in our crowded cities, it is surely very, very studious in encouraging filth, fever, miasm, and malaria amongst them. By the deprivation of these natural requisites for our existence, the Board of Health, with all its sanitary regulations, stands shackled in its useful progress; for wherever light and air are wanting in our dwellings, there cholera and contagion with all their attendant destroyers are prone to stalk. O ye advisers of our Royal Queen, ye who have thoughtfully given us cheap bread, deny us not the full enjoyment of our health and existence. "God said let there be light, and there was light," but ye now tax His bounty to the destruction of His creatures.—J. F. C.

MACHINE FOR LIFTING SACKS.—A north country miller was lately endeavouring to enlighten some of his fellow dust-bags on the subject of knowledge in general, when one of them quizzically said to him, "Come awa, Jock: knowledge is power, ye ken: gie's a lift wi' this sack." It was Jock, no doubt, who lately gave his scoffing boon companion a practical proof that knowledge is power, even in so small a way,—by inventing a simple machine to save labour of a most severe description. To lift a sack of perhaps 2 cwts. up on a man's back requires two other men: this aid is now superseded by the "sack-lifter," as it is called—a very unpretending piece of mechanism, consisting of a rectangular frame of wood, within which the sack is filled, with the bottom resting on a board, which is elevated to the requisite height by means of a cord at each corner, passing over pulleys and wound upon a drum, this drum being turned by a common crank handle. Thus one man can fill the sack, elevate it to the level of his back, and carry it away.

ARCHITECTS' CHARGES: LIABILITY.—In a recent action brought by Mr. Sprague, architect, at Nisi Prius, to recover 112*l.*, alleged to be due by a Roman Catholic priest in the Commercial-road district for different plans and drawings ordered by him to be made for a church and schools to be erected in that district, the defendant urged that the plaintiff had volunteered to prepare the plans without remuneration, upon the expectation of being employed to build the church, and that it was absurd to suppose that a man like the defendant, who was dependent for his support on the contributions of the poorest of the poor, would give orders to render himself liable for such an amount. Mr. Justice Patteson having summed up, the jury gave a verdict for the plaintiff to the full amount.

NAPHTHA LAMPS.—These appear to be most dangerous articles. Of late we scarcely ever look over the news of a week without seeing some account of an accident from their use. In last week's papers we perceive no less than four such cases. In one at Seacombe, while a teacher was filling a naphtha lamp, the naphtha ran over, and coming in contact with a candle held by a boy, took fire, and the whole exploded, driving out a partition wall 12 feet long and 9 feet high, and setting fire to the house. The teacher and several of his scholars were severely burnt, and one of the latter has since died from the injuries sustained. In another case nearly the same thing happened at Manchester so far as regarded the replenishment, the explosion from contact with a light held by a boy while a man poured out the naphtha, and the death of the boy. In Oldham and Bolton two cases nearly identical in every respect occurred, in which two stall women were severely burnt. We observe the occasional occurrence of the very same sort of casualties detailed in the American newspapers. It is easy to say that carelessness or ignorance of the proper mode of dealing with so dangerous an agent is the usual cause of such accidents: were naphtha ever only a little less imminently dangerous, time might be allowed the public to acquire an adequate knowledge of the way to manage it; but as it

is, they are purchasing that knowledge at rather too great an expense, and we think it a duty to warn all and sundry against tampering with so dangerous an agent.

ST. JAMES'S PARK AND ST. JAMES'S PARISH.—At a very numerous meeting of the vestry of St. James's, Westminster, Mr. Nelson moved,—“That a petition be presented to Parliament to require the Commissioners of Woods and Forests to deposit plans and give notices of any proposed alterations in the property belonging to the Crown and the public, as is required by individuals or public companies under the standing orders of the Houses of Parliament.” In proposing his resolution, Mr. Nelson reviewed some recent doings of the Woods and Forests, particularly referring to the Mall, the marble arch, the sculpture by Westmacott and Bailey, and some of the London improvements; and quoted the second report of the committee of the Commons on the last of these subjects to show that the control he suggested was necessary. His proposal, he remarked, was no novelty, for it was a plan adopted in Rome in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Government, he considered, should appoint some one to receive communications from local bodies as to desirable improvements, these to form the grounds of Bills in Parliament to give powers to purchase, &c. The resolution was passed unanimously, and the churchwardens, with Messrs. Nelson, Miley, and Wilks, having been appointed a committee to draw up the petition, the vestry, after some other business, separated.

METROPOLITAN SEWAGE MANURE COMPANY.—The tenth half-yearly meeting of this company was held at Willis's Rooms on 5th inst., Mr. H. P. Fuller in the chair. The report stated that the works for bringing the contents of the Ranelagh and intermediate sewers to the company's station at Stanley-bridge were in progress, and that the improvement in the general aspect of the company's affairs, arising out of this measure would have been very decisive and important, if the directors had been enabled at once to carry the pipes to a distant district, in which case they were confident that their early anticipations of profit would have been realised. The report concluded with an appeal to the shareholders for the means of transferring, in concert with the Commissioners of Sewers, the contents of the sewers of their district from the waters of the Thames, to the improvement of the lands as far as Hounslow and Isleworth. The engineer's report stated that since last meeting the works had been in proper order, and that they had been working for 38 days, or 881 hours. A proprietor asked what was the prospect they had of success in this undertaking? The chairman said they were confident of success, because if their capital was confined to their present amount they would be able to supply the whole of the Fulham district, which, if the gardeners took it, would pay the expenses, and leave a dividend. When they saw the result of thus manuring the ground, and the excellent crops produced by it—even three crops of celery from the same ground in the same year—then, he said, men would not refuse using that which was so beneficial to themselves. The company had now the means of living until all prejudices had been done away with.

DANGER TO ST. STEPHEN'S, WALBROOK.—St. Stephen's, Walbrook, is now in a state of repair, but there seems no intention of removing the unsightly shop from before it in Mansion-house-place. If a fire were to happen in that house, the church would be certainly (much injured, or) destroyed. Limehouse Church was destroyed by fire from a much less cause than that would be. There is a large open window in the tower just over the roof, which would form such an indraught for flakes of burning matter that it would be next to an impossibility to preserve it. Pray say a word of caution in time. The rent of such a shop cannot be an object in a pecuniary view.

AN AGENT.

SUBURBAN ART-SCHOOLS.—In reply to an inquirer, we are able to state that any endeavour which is now being made to establish a school for drawing and modelling in Lambeth is irrespective of the committee who established the North London School. But the committee, we believe, contemplate forming a school there shortly.

METROPOLITAN SEWERS' COMMISSION.—On 12th inst., at an adjourned general meeting, after several appeals were considered and an application by the wardens of Dulwich College for time to pay 3*l.* 12*s.* of rate agreed to, Mr. Peto made a statement with reference to the Bermondsey district, in which he deprecated the severity of some comments made on the sewerage of Jacobs' Island, and said that he wished to correct an erroneous impression which had got abroad, that the difficulties that had arisen by certain legal proceedings on account of the filling up of the tidal ditches in connection with that island had been the effect of the operations of the present commission; nevertheless, he did not mean to blame the previous commission, who had circumstances of great difficulty to cope with in the cholera season. The court was then made special for the purpose of authorizing the construction of a variety of extensive works (already specified in a recent number of THE BUILDER), and which were accordingly ordered to be carried out. A report from Mr. Forster was then read, recommending the execution of extensive works for the drainage of Lee, Lewisham, and its vicinity, and for the diversion of the house-drainage from the Ravensbourne, on the payment of a contribution of 5,000*l.* (out of 14,630*l.*) from the Kent Water Works Company.* The court thereupon resumed, and ordered various other new works, when there ceased to be a quorum to dispose of the cases of appellants present from the outset: a quorum, however, was at length got, and the cases disposed of. Mr. Austin's plan for public conveniences, mentioned by us last week, was examined, and reported on favourably by Mr. Forster, whose opinion was ordered to be forwarded to the inventor.

THE PRESIDENT OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY.—Her Majesty has conferred the honour of knighthood upon Mr. Charles Lock Eastlake.

THE BUILDERS' BENEVOLENT INSTITUTION.—Our readers will perceive in our advertising columns that an election of two females and three males on the funds of the Builders' Benevolent Institution will take place on the 28th inst. We trust it may lead some who have kept aloof to join the society. There is every reason why this should be one of the largest charitable institutions in the kingdom if builders and their merchants had the inclination. There are four pensioners on the funds, elected last year. The society was established in 1847, and has now 2,300*l.* stock.

ARCHITECTS' BENEVOLENT SOCIETY.—It has been arranged to call a meeting of the profession and subscribers for the purpose of adopting the rules for the society and electing the committee and officers, at the Freemasons' Tavern, Great Queen-street, Lincoln's-inn-fields, on Wednesday, the 27th inst.

ENLARGEMENT OF BRITISH MUSEUM.—Why not roof over the entire area of the centre court with glass supported from the interior by two rows of iron columns. Little light would be lost to the surrounding windows, and a hall would thus be obtained of sufficient extent not only for the sculptures at present scattered about the court-yard and passages, but for the accumulations of another century.—W. J.

VITREOUS BRICK, TILE, AND TUBE MANUFACTURE.—A patent has been granted to Mr. W. G. Elliot, of Blisworth, Northamptonshire, for the melting or running of clay, sand, limestone, cinders, chalk, earth, shell, and other materials, in a state of fusion, into moulds or casts of the shapes of bricks and tiles, culverts, pipes, &c.

POMPEII.—The Neapolitan Government have granted a sum of 20,000 ducats for continuing the excavations of Pompeii.

LAMORNA STONE QUARRIES.—Mr. Freeman is working a stone at these quarries, intended for the Great Exhibition in London: it is 20 feet in length, and weighs upwards of 20 tons.

* A committee of the ratepayers of Camberwell have issued a report on the proposed system of drainage for the Surrey and Kent districts, in which they condemn that system in so measured terms.